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ABSTRACT

The University System of Georgia and the Georgia Professional Standards Commission formed the University System of Georgia Reading Consortium in response to Georgia's need to improve the preparation of teachers to teach reading. It emphasized the professional development of classroom teachers. Institutions seeking to offer a Reading Endorsement program submitted proposals to the Georgia Professional Standards Commission for approval, which were peer reviewed by the Consortium. The Consortium developed a proposal template for institutions seeking to offer the program. Three strands included: understanding the reader and the reading process, linking literacy assessment and instruction, and instructional strategies in the content areas across preK-12. Generally, institutions built a course around each strand and included a year-long field experience in which teachers had to demonstrate these competencies. The main delivery models were a summer reading institute model and a distance learning model. WebCT was selected as the vehicle for the distance learning model, offering each course online. In the Summer Reading Institute Model, the major content for all three stands is presented in a 3-week format, with follow-up assignments associated with the field experience turned in throughout the following year. The model used by Kennesaw State University, Georgia, is described. (SM)

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Enhancing Professional Practice through WebCT: A Model for Preparing Reading Professionals

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Background

In 1999 the University System of Georgia in conjunction with the Georgia Professional Standards Commission formed the University System of Georgia Reading Consortium. This consortium was created in response to the state's need to improve the preparation of its teachers to teach reading. The focus was on the professional development of classroom teachers (Pre-kindergarten through Grade Twelve) in the area of reading. Standards adapted from the International Reading Association were established as performance outcomes to be met by those seeking to receive the Reading Endorsement. Improved student achievement in reading is the ultimate criterion measure of the success of the program.

Institutions seeking to offer a Reading Endorsement program were required to submit a proposal to the Georgia Professional Standards Commission (PSC) for approval. However, prior to submission of the proposal to the PSC, the proposal had to be peer reviewed by the University System of Georgia Reading Consortium (USGRC). To ensure consistency of content across the state, the Consortium identified three program strands as the areas of focus for the Reading Endorsement and designed a proposal template that each institution would adapt to its own teacher preparation model. The three strands were (1) Understanding the Reader and the Reading Process, (2) Linking Literacy Assessment and Instruction, and (3) Instructional Strategies in the Content Areas Across PreK-12. These strands cut across the nine reading standards of the program. In most instances, institutions found it efficient to build a course around each strand and to include a year-long field experience whereby teachers would be required to demonstrate these competencies. The Consortium identified two primary delivery models for the Reading Endorsement Program. One was the Summer Reading Institute Model and the other one was the Distance Learning Model.

WebCT was chosen as the vehicle for the Distance Learning Model. In this model, each course is offered online. In the Summer Reading Institute Model, the major content for all three strands of the program is presented in a three-week format. Follow-up assignments associated with the field experience are turned in at different points during the follow-up year prior to the teachers receiving the Reading Endorsement.

Kennesaw State University's Model

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Kennesaw State University, which is a member institution of the University System of Georgia Reading Consortium, utilizes a combined delivery model. It offers two of the Reading Endorsement courses in an intensive Summer Reading Institute and the third course as a regular semester course. During the following year, teachers integrate literacy-related instructional strategies and assessment techniques in their curriculum with the support of university faculty and their respective school administrators. The two courses offered in the Summer Reading Institute are **EDUC 7715 – Reading Theory and Application** and **EDUC 7717 – Reading Instruction and Assessment**. The third course is **EDUC 7718 – Reading Strategies for the Content Fields**. WebCT is being used to deliver the third course online in a modified format and to establish an online learning community.

The Reading Endorsement Program at Kennesaw State University embodies the conceptual framework of KSU's teacher preparation model, "Preparing Professional Learning Facilitators through Collaboration. The model stipulates that a teacher is knowledgeable of subject content and pedagogy, and well versed in the characteristics of students of different ages, abilities and cultural backgrounds. This correlates to the first strand of the Reading Endorsement Program: Knowledge of the Reader and the Reading Process. The model stipulates further that the teacher, as facilitator, be able to demonstrate proficient and flexible use of different ways of teaching to actively engage students in learning. This includes skill in integrating technology into instruction. This part of the model supports Strand Three of the Reading Endorsement Program: Instructional Strategies. Another stipulation of the model is that professional learning facilitators know when and how to assess learning by means of various forms of traditional and authentic assessments. This supports Strand Two of the Reading Endorsement Program: Linking Literacy Assessment and Instruction.

Finally, Kennesaw State University's conceptual model, "Preparing Professional Learning Facilitators through Collaboration" states that as a professional educator, the teacher/ facilitator values collaboration and seeks opportunities to work with other professionals and community members to improve the educational experiences for children and youth. In the web-based course that is presented, teachers use WebCT to access course content, to post and receive assignments and messages, to share reflections and teaching tips with one another, to communicate with the instructor and classmates via e-mail, and to access professional resources such as Reading Online. In addition, live discussions on pre-determined course-related topics are held in the chat room on a regular basis, with the instructor serving as a facilitator.

Teachers enrolled in the course post reflections on their implementation of strategies for teaching literacy every two weeks. These are made public so that class members can respond to one another's reflections in addition to the instructor responding. Teachers benefit from the reflections and responses of their peers as well as from the instructor's responses. Teachers offer one another suggestions and support, and ask questions. The online learning community thus created, promotes collaboration among peers to help improve the literacy learning of students.

Reading Endorsement Course Descriptions

Kennesaw State University

EDUC 7715 – Reading Theory & Application

A study of the research and theories underlying language acquisition and the reading process and how this applies to developmental reading practices in the school. Home-school influences and how to meet the literacy needs of diverse learners in the classroom will also be emphasized. **(Offered in the Summer Reading Institute)**

EDUC 7717 – Reading Assessment & Instruction

An overview of the causes of reading difficulties; study of formal and informal assessment procedures with an emphasis on classroom-based assessment techniques and the use of assessment in making instructional decisions. **(Offered in the Summer Reading Institute)**

EDUC 7718 – Reading Strategies for the Content Fields (K-12)

A study of the concepts and specific processing strategies involved in reading and writing in the content areas. Emphasizes development and selection of materials and teaching strategies appropriate for the specific subject area and grade level. **(Offered online via WebCT in the Fall)**

KENNESAW STATE UNIVERSITY
University System of Georgia

Preparing Professional Learning Facilitators through Collaboration

What Learning Facilitators Need to Know

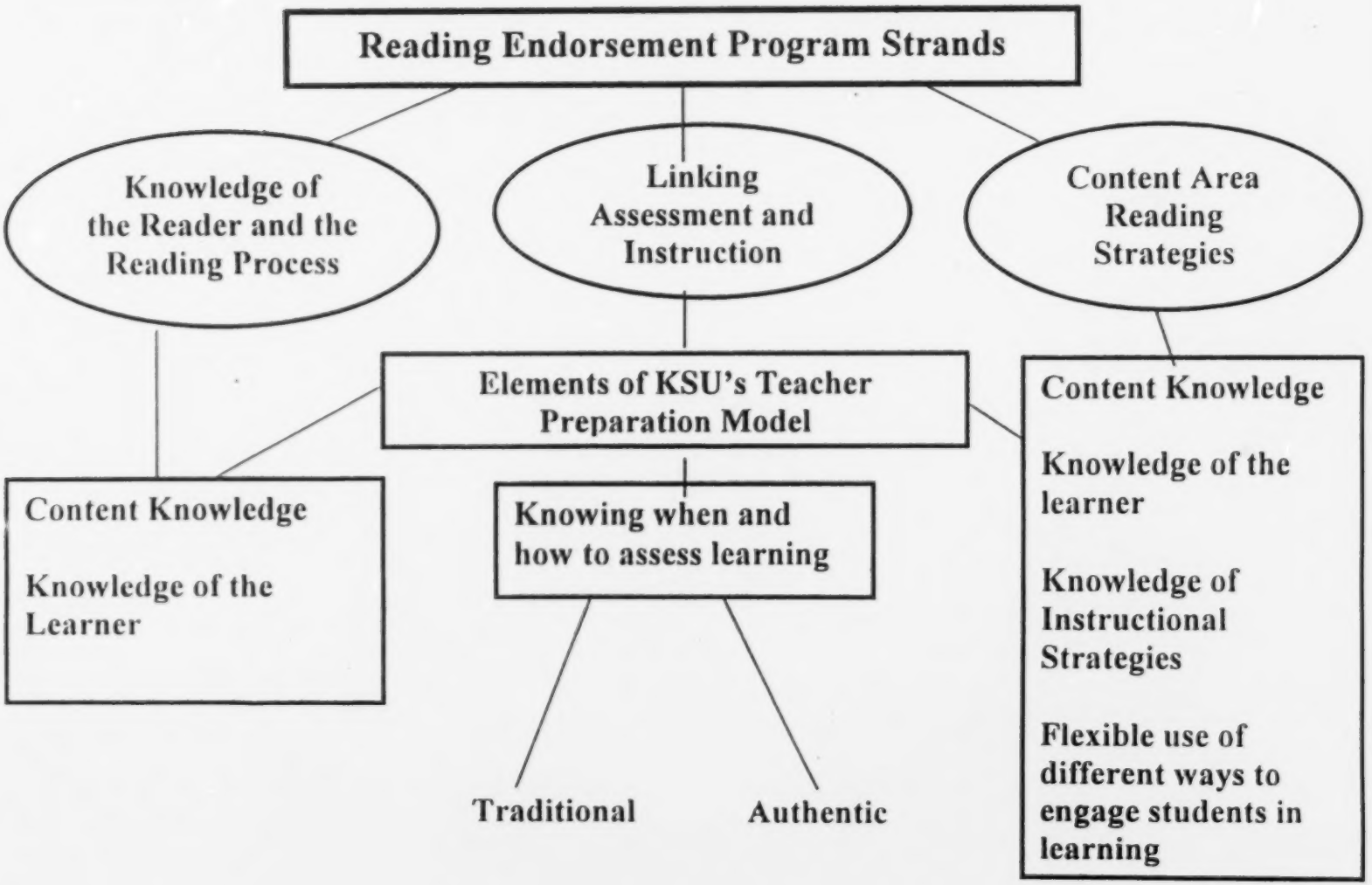
- Content Knowledge
- Characteristics of Learner
- Teaching Strategies
- When and How to Assess

EXPECTED OUTCOME:
Improved Student Learning

What Learning Facilitators Need to Be Able to Do

- Actively Engage Students in Learning
- Demonstrate Proficient and Flexible Use of Different Ways of Teaching
- Integrate Technology into Instruction
- Create an Environment Where Students Can Be Successful
- Motivate Students to Learn
- Assess Learning
- Collaborate with Other Professionals and Community Members

Relationship Between Model and Program


Reading Endorsement Program Strands
Knowledge of the Reader and the Reading Process
Linking Assessment and Instruction
Content Area Reading Strategies
Elements of KSU's Teacher Preparation Model
Content Knowledge
Knowledge of the Learner
Knowing when and how to assess learning
Traditional
Authentic
Content Knowledge
Knowledge of the learner
Knowledge of Instructional Strategies
Flexible use of different ways to engage students in learning

WebCT Components: An Overview